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(71) Applicant : **TELEFONAKTIEBOLAGET L M ERICSSON**
S-126 25 Stockholm (SE)

(72) Inventor : **Arras, Juho**
Snoilsky Väg 2
S-112 54 Stockholm (SE)
Inventor : **Ohlstedt, Mats Carlos Sixtensson**
Ehrenstrålsvägen 35
S-161 55 Bromma (SE)

(74) Representative : **Svanfeldt, Hans-Ake et al**
DR. LUDWIG BRANN PATENTBYRA AB Box
1344 Drottninggatan 7
S-751 43 Uppsala (SE)

(54) Arrangement for reduced power supply to a subscriber line.

(57) An arrangement for feeding the subscriber's lines (10) of a public exchange with reduced line current upon the occurrence of a power failure, when the temperature within the public exchange or the temperature of individual components, mounted on circuit boards on which line interface circuits are present, exceeds a predetermined reference value, when the length of a subscriber's line is less than a line length reference value, or when the conversation time on a subscriber's line exceeds a conversation time reference value. All subscriber's lines or individual subscriber's lines only are fed with the reduced line current for a restricted time (Figure 5B).

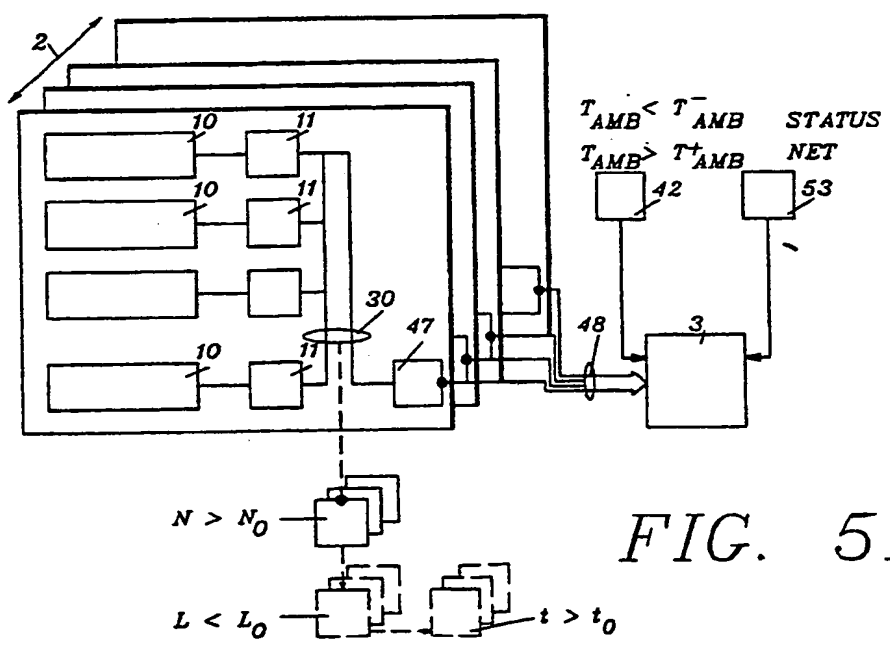


FIG. 5B

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AN ARRANGEMENT FOR REDUCED POWER SUPPLY

BACKGROUND ART

The present invention is intended for use in telephone exchange modules of the kind which include a magazine which houses subscriber line circuits, a regional processor which forms the main control means of the line interface circuits, and associated circuits, such as ring generators, tone receivers, time selectors, for instance. The telephone exchange module is normally dependent on central group selectors which serve several telephone exchange modules. Each subscriber line circuit is connected to a respective subscriber over a telephone line. Normally, eight line circuits are combined on a circuit board, a so-called line board, although one line board may contain fewer or more line circuits. The remaining circuits of the module are also incorporated on circuit boards. The module as a whole thus comprises a large number of circuit boards which are arranged parallel with one another in a magazine. The circuit cards in a magazine are normally cooled by means of conventional convection-air-cooling systems. A local telephone exchange may comprise one or more such magazines. The magazines are placed in cabinets positioned in a room equipped with an air-conditioning system which functions to maintain the air temperature in the room within appropriate limits, these limits being selected so that the function of the telephone exchange module will be ensured irrespective of the ambient temperature. Energy is supplied to the magazine of a telephone exchange module from the mains network, via a conventional current supply unit comprising a rectifier and smoothing circuits. The local telephone exchange also includes a reserve current source, in the form of batteries. This reserve current source is used in the event of a mains failure, so that telephone traffic is able to continue unimpeded.

In unfavourable circumstances, for instance unsuitable positioning of the module or a failure in an air-conditioning system, the ambient temperature of the telephone exchange may rise to 40-50°C, which can result in undesirable functional disturbances.

A telephone exchange, and not only a telephone exchange of the aforescribed kind, but also telephone exchanges in general, must be dimensioned in accordance with its peak load. It is normally a requirement that telephone traffic shall be able to continue at peak load periods while maintaining a high sound quality, among other things. This creates dimensioning problems, among other things because the boards present in the magazine generate considerable heat during peak load periods. The development of heat in an underlying magazine influences, to some extent, the ambient temperature of an overlying magazine. Since the boards are densely packed side-by-side in

a magazine, the heat generated adjacent one board will also influence the ambient temperature of adjacent boards. Such thermal influence is unfavourable and requires the use of circuit board components which are highly tolerable to heat, in order to ensure reliability in operation. This is expensive.

In order to dimension the telephone exchange so that it is able to manage all traffic during a peak load period, it is necessary to dimension the batteries so that they are able to deliver the power required to operate the exchange during a peak load period in the event of a mains failure. The batteries must therefore be dimensioned to deliver a high power output over a specified operating time, typically four hours. This makes the batteries expensive and bulky.

The temperature of a line board can also increase when a subscriber line is short, wherein the line has a low ohmic resistance and a high current passes through those circuits through which current is supplied to the line, hereinafter referred to as supply circuits. These supply circuits will therewith be heated. If, on the other hand, the subscriber line is long, its ohmic resistance will be high and a small current will pass through the supply circuits, which are thus not heated.

Another source resulting in the heating of line board components is the length of the call or conversation being made. The longer a call, the longer the line board components remain active and the more heat generated by these components.

Another source of heat is the number of lines which are active simultaneously on each line board.

German patent DE 25 51 916 relates to a device for reducing the loop current of a subscriber line in order to keep heat losses low. A control signal, derived from the loop current is used to select either a normal or a reduce line supply voltage. Should the loop current exceed a threshold value - as is the case for short subscriber lines, then the reduced supply voltage is selected and the loop current will drop. A reduced loop current is preferred in order to keep heat losses in the line circuit low thus allowing the use of cheap resistors in the line circuit. This selection is made at the occasion when the subscriber line is connected to the exchange. Once the supply voltage has been selected it is never changed.

This known device is of a static nature and will not account for varying operating conditions prevailing in the exchange such as for example an increase of the traffic intensity, an increase of the ambient temperature of the exchange or switching to battery operation of the exchange.

DISCLOSURE OF THE INVENTION

One object of the present invention is to reduce the power losses on each line board in dependence on prevailing, detected operation parameters.

Another object of the invention is to reduce the power requirement (ampere hours) which the reserve batteries must be capable of supplying in order for the telephone exchange to manage traffic peaks during peak load periods.

These objects are achieved by introducing an additional line supply state for the line circuits. This additional line supply state is characterized in that the subscriber line is supplied with a line current which follows a predetermined line-current/line-voltage characteristic which when the line current exceeds a predetermined value has a progress which corresponds to the progress obtained when the subscriber line is supplied from a high-ohmic supply circuit. This reduces the line current, and therefore also power losses. In some cases, the reduced line current will impair sound quality, although this quality is still acceptable, and hence the traffic is able to proceed with no limitation in traffic strength.

The state in which supply is effected with reduced line current is referred to in the following as the RP-state of the subscriber line (reduced power supply). The characteristic features of the invention are set forth in the following Claim 1.

The supply resistance to a subscriber line varies from country to country and may also vary within a country, from administration to administration. For this reason, and also for other reasons not specified here, present-day line circuits include a line voltage supply circuit which functions to measure the line voltage of a subscriber and to produce a corresponding line voltage signal, a current control circuit in which a number of line-current/line-voltage characteristics are stored and which has a first input for the line voltage signal, a second input for a selector signal for selecting a predetermined characteristic from among said characteristics, and an output for producing a control signal whose value corresponds to the line current prescribed by the selected characteristic and the prevailing line voltage, and a current supply device having an input and an output, said input being connected to the output of the current control circuit for receiving the control signal, and said output being connected to the subscriber line for the purpose of supplying to said line the line current which corresponds to the current prescribed by the control signal.

A current supply device of this kind is known from our WO publications 84/00459, 84/01249 and 84/01250.

The selection signal intended for the selection of characteristics in control circuits is delivered from a main control unit which is connected to the line circuits through a bus line which is common to all line circuits.

The selection signal normally has the form of a combination of data signals, which may have a high or a low logic level and which are transmitted on a number of data lines in a bus line. Each signal combination is corresponded by a respective characteristic. The main control unit is programmed to deliver the selection signal which corresponds to the characteristic which in turn corresponds to the supply resistance used by the administration. The program in the main control unit generates the selection signals. This obviates the need of manufacturing, storing and retailing line boards which incorporate supply circuits which include mutually different resistances.

The invention enables different characteristics to be selected for activating supply to the subscriber line with a reduced line current prescribed by a new characteristic selected so that all subscriber lines, or selected subscriber lines, are supplied temporarily by a high-ohmic supply circuit, in order to therewith reduce power losses.

According to the present invention, activation of a characteristic which corresponds to the RP-state can be initiated by several different operation parameters, for instance the prevailing temperature (TAMB) in the room or space in which the magazine is stored, the temperature (T_j) adjacent an individual line board or within an individual component on a line board, the length (L) of a subscriber line, the duration (t) of a telephone call or the number (N) of active subscriber lines on one and the same line board. The RP-state is preferably activated when the following combinations of operation parameters are fulfilled:

- * The ambient temperature (TAMB) is higher than a predetermined reference value (T^*_{AMB}), wherein the line circuits of all line cards are supplied with reduced line current;

- * the ambient temperature is higher than a predetermined reference value (T^*_{AMB}) and the number of active lines (N) on individual line boards is greater than a predetermined reference value (N_0), wherein only those line circuits found on these individual line boards are supplied through a high-ohmic circuit;

- * the ambient temperature (TAMB) is higher than a predetermined reference value (T^*_{AMB}) at the same time as the duration (t) of the call or conversation exceeds a predetermined reference value (t_0) and/or the length (L) of the subscriber line is shorter than a predetermined reference value (L_0), wherein only the line circuit concerned is switched to the RE-state;

- * the temperature (T_j) of an individual component in a line board is higher than a predetermined reference value (T^*_j), wherein only the line board which includes said component is switched to supply with reduced line current;

- * a combination of the aforesaid operation parameters.

The purpose of utilizing a mutual combination of several operation parameters to initiate activation of the RP-state is to reduce the operation time with reduced supply, since in some instances this reduced supply may impair the electroacoustic properties of the telephones concerned. Consequently, it is desired to maintain the shortest possible operation time in the RP-state, so that the interference with the normal operation of the telephone exchange will not have a disturbing effect on the subscribers.

In the event of a power failure, causing an interruption in the conventional current supply to the telephone exchange, all line circuits which are controlled by the aforesaid operation parameter combinations are switched to the RP-state.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The invention will now be described in more detail with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a telephone exchange module;

Figure 2 is a schematic, block diagram illustrating a line circuit and an associated control circuit;

Figure 3 is a diagram which illustrates two different current supply characteristics;

Figure 4 is a simplified diagram of a current supply circuit;

Figures 5a-5d are block schematics which illustrate a line circuit and a main control unit, the Figures also showing various combinations of monitored operation parameters; and

Figure 6 is a block schematic which illustrates the inventive arrangement.

BEST MODES OF CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

Figure 1 illustrates a telephone exchange module which includes a magazine 1 which contains a plurality of densely packed circuit boards. More specifically, the magazine includes sixteen line boards 2. The telephone exchange module also includes a main control unit 3, a plurality of tone receivers 4 and other circuits used in the module, these other circuits being referenced generally with the reference numeral 5. The units 3, 4 and 5 are mounted on a plurality of boards in the magazine 1. The magazine 1 further includes a plurality of ring signal generating circuits 6, which are also mounted on boards placed in the magazine, and also a plurality of time selector circuits mounted on circuit boards 7.

Figure 2 illustrates a line circuit 10 and a control circuit 11 which controls the line circuit. Only those parts of the two circuits 10 and 11 which are relevant for the supply of current to the subscriber line to which the line circuit belongs are shown in the Figure. Thus,

no speech paths, signalling means, etc. are shown in the Figure. The subscriber line includes, conventionally, an A-wire and a B-wire, which are referenced 12 and 13 respectively. Seated between the wires 12, 13 is a series combination consisting of a resistor 14, a capacitor 15 and a resistor 16. The supply of current to the subscriber line 12, 13 is controlled in the following manner: The voltage between the A and B wires is low-pass filtered in the R-C-R link formed by the resistors 14, 16 and the capacitor 15. The resultant d.c. voltage is detected by an amplifier 17. The level of the output signal from the amplifier 17 is shifted and scaled in a signal processing circuit 18 from a normal level of 20-50 V to a level of about 0.5-1.25 V, in order to enable the signal to pass the control circuit 11. Further filtration is carried out in a low-pass filter 19, for the purpose of eliminating the alternating voltage generated by speech signals on the line and superimposed on a d.c. voltage.

The line circuit illustrated in Figure 2 includes a current control circuit 20 in which a plurality of different current supply characteristics are stored, among them characteristics which correspond to conventional line supply above 2×250 ohm, and the characteristic which corresponds to reduced supply, for instance corresponding to 2×10 k Ω in accordance with the invention. The progress followed by these two characteristics is shown in Figure 3.

In several countries, the subscriber line 12, 13 is normally supplied with 50 V across a supply resistance of 2×250 ohm. When the subscriber line is short-circuited, the maximum current will then be 100 milliamperes and the line voltage will be 50 V, in the case of a line of indefinite length. This current supply characteristic is referenced with the line 21. It is proposed in accordance with the invention that the state of supplying the subscriber line with reduced line current, RP-state, shall have the characteristic corresponded by the broken line 22 in Figure 3. This characteristic 22 follows the characteristic 21 until the line current reaches to about 25 milliamperes, whereafter the characteristic is interrupted and follows a substantially horizontal part which, in accordance with the invention, corresponds to supplying the line with 2×10 k Ω .

Assume that a subscriber line loads the line circuit to an extent that the load line 23 adopts the state illustrated in Figure 3. Thus, in the case of normal current supply, a current of about 52 milliamperes will be supplied to the subscriber line, whereas when a switch occurs to the RP-state, all subscriber lines will be supplied with only about 28 milliamperes. The line current is thus reduced by 24 milliamperes.

It will also be seen from Figure 2 that signals delivered to the control circuit 11 are transmitted over a bus line 30. The current control circuit 20 receives an order as to which characteristic shall be selected, from a selection signal transmitted on the bus line 30,

this selection signal being obtained from the main control unit. The current control circuit 20 delivers current to an amplifier 24, on the basis of the selected characteristic and on the basis of the measured line voltage. The output signal of the amplifier 24 is sent to two control circuits 25, 26 each of which controls a respective current amplifier 27, 28 which sends the line current I_L determined by said characteristic to the two wires 12, 13 of the subscriber line. The method of generating the desired line current I_L can be described in the simplified manner illustrated in Figure 4. The line circuit 10 and its control circuit 11 function to produce electronically an electric circuit of the kind illustrated in Figure 4. This circuit includes a battery 31 with an earthed positive terminal. The subscriber line, represented by a load resistor R_L , is supplied from the battery through a respective supply resistance 32A and 32B. In reality, the battery voltage and the supply resistances are generated electronically. The EMF of the battery 31 and the supply resistances 32A and 32B are selected in accordance with selected current supply characteristics, so that the line supply current I_L will equal $f(V'_{AB})$, where V'_{AB} corresponds to the voltage that prevails between the A and B wires of the subscriber line subsequent to scaling in the signal processing circuit 18. The voltage V'_{AB} is converted in the current control circuit to a current I_{CON} in accordance with the relationship $I_{CON} = k_i V'_{AB} + I_{oi}$, where k_i and I_{oi} ($i=1,2,3,\dots$) are constants and have different values corresponding to different characteristics. The values of k_i and I_{oi} can be taken from a table, for instance. Alternatively, k_i can be realized by applying V'_{AB} on a resistor chosen from several resistors of which each resistor corresponds to a respective k_i -value. I_{oi} is generated in a corresponding manner, by applying a constant reference voltage to a resistor selected from several resistors, each corresponding to a respective I_{oi} . Another alternative of generating I_{CON} is one in which V'_{AB} is applied to a processor locally provided for the line circuit and which on the basis of V'_{AB} and the desired characteristic functions to control the current control circuit (20) in a manner which causes the circuit to deliver the current

$$I_{CON} = K_i V'_{AB} + I_{oi}$$

The current I_{CON} is then supplied to the amplifier 24 and the control circuits 25, 26, these circuits and the current amplifiers being of the kind described in our aforesaid WO-patent specifications.

The operation parameters which shall be monitored in the telephone exchange module will now be described. The parameters are monitored and compared with reference values. When the reference values are exceeded, the RP-state is activated. The operation parameters are monitored continuously during this RP-state period and when they finally drop below the reference values, possibly beneath modified reference values, switching of the module to normal operation is initiated.

Figure 5a illustrates an embodiment according to which the ambient temperature T_{AMB} of the line board 2 in the magazine 1 is monitored. The supply of current to the magazine from the power network is also monitored, in order to indicate the occurrence of a possible power failure.

It will be seen from Figure 5a that each line board 2 includes a local processor 47 which monitors all line circuits, normally eight in number, on the line board and which searches the line circuits on the board and reports the status of the line circuits to the main control unit 3, via a bus line 48.

The ambient temperature is sensed by a temperature sensor in the form of an oscillator 40, shown in Figure 6, which is mounted on one of the boards in the magazine and which is connected to the bus line 48 through the intermediary of an interface 41. The oscillator circuit is conventional and includes a number of components which determine oscillator frequency. According to the invention, these components include a temperature responsive element 42, for instance a thermistor. The temperature responsive element 42 is mounted in the room in which the magazine 1 is enclosed and projects out from the magazine 1, as illustrated schematically in Figure 1. When the telephone exchange module operates normally, the oscillator produces an oscillation signal having the frequency f . A representation of the oscillator signal is transmitted, via bus lines 30, 48, to the main control unit 3, which includes a processor, schematically illustrated within the broken-line rectangle 3 in Figure 6, via an I/O-unit 43., to which the bus line 48 extends. The processor 3 includes another I/O-unit 44 which is connected with a communication bus line 45. This latter communication bus line is connected with a central processor unit CPU (not shown) which is common to several telephone exchange modules. A block 46 included in the main control unit 3 represents a program which compares monitored operation parameters with the reference values of the operation parameters and which initiates the generation of a first control signal for switching to the RP-state, and a second control signal for switching to a normal operation state. The main control unit 3 also includes a plurality of storage regions in which the reference values of the operation parameters are stored. More specifically, the control unit includes a memory region 50 in which a first frequency value of the oscillator frequency is stored. This first reference value corresponds to the circumstance when the ambient temperature T_{AMB} is higher than a predetermined temperature $T + T_{AMB}$, e.g. 40°C , and indicates that the RP-state shall be activated. The unit also includes a memory region 51 in which a second oscillator frequency reference value is stored. This second reference value corresponds to the circumstance when the ambient temperature T_{AMB} has a value $T - T_{AMB}$ suitable for normal operation, e.g. 37°C , and

when the second control signal shall be produced and that the RP-state shall therefore be deactivated and a switch made to normal supply. When $T^{+}_{AMB} > T^{-}_{AMB}$ a temperature hysteresis is obtained.

The prevailing value of the oscillator frequency, i.e. the prevailing temperature value T_{AMB} is stored in a memory region 52, which is updated periodically.

When the telephone exchange includes several telephone exchange modules, the temperature transducer, or temperature responsive element 42 may be placed centrally in the room in which all modules 1 are arranged. In this case, the arrangement will preferably include an additional temperature responsive element, in order to make the arrangement more reliable.

It is thus evident that when the first control signal is delivered, all 128 subscriber lines connected to the module will be switched to the RP-state.

The prevailing status of the power network, i.e. whether or not there is a power failure, is indicated by means of a status signal which is sent from the central processor unit CPU (not shown) of the exchange on the communication bus line 45. This status signal is stored in a memory region 53. When the status signal corresponds to normal mains operation, the program block 46 delivers the second control signal, whereas if the status signal corresponds to a power failure, the program block 46 delivers the first control signal for activating the RP-state, wherewith all subscriber lines in the module are switched to the RP-state.

It will be seen from Figure 2 that each line circuit 10 receives the signals on the bus line 30, via a control logic block 33 having three parallel data outputs on which data signals D0, D1 and D2 are sent to a control circuit 29 for adjusting the line circuit 10 to different operational modes.

The control logic block 33 is connected to the current control circuit 20 and to a loop detector circuit 37, via a bus line 60. The control logic block is also connected to the A/D-converter 38, via bus 39. These circuits are described below in more detail. When the current control circuit 20 receives the first control signal, the signal selects the current supply characteristic 22, whereas when it receives the second control signal said circuit selects the current supply characteristic 21.

Figure 5b illustrates a variant of the monitoring system illustrated in Figure 5a. In the case of the Figure 5b embodiment, it is possible to reduce the number of lines which are ordered to take the RP-state when the ambient temperature exceeds the first reference value T^{+}_{AMB} . When the number of active lines N on a line board is greater than a threshold value N_0 , e.g. $N_0 = 4$, and when the ambient temperature T_{AMB} is greater than the predetermined first reference value T^{+}_{AMB} , this is reported to the main control unit 3 which therewith orders activation of the RP-state for all line circuits on that line board where $N > N_0$. Thus, only those line boards on which the threshold value

N_0 is exceeded will be ordered to take the RP-state. For instance, if $N_0 \leq 4$ in all 16 line boards 2, the RP-state will not be initiated in these 64 subscriber lines. This shall be compared with the case according to Figure 5a, where all 128 lines are ordered to the RP-state when the detected temperature exceeds the first ambient temperature reference value T^{+}_{AMB} .

The threshold value N_0 , i.e. the number of active lines on each board, is stored in a memory region 64 (see Figure 6) and is compared with the number of active lines N on each board, which is reported continuously by each local processor 47 to the main control unit 3. The prevailing value N of the number of active line circuits on a line board is stored in a memory region 65. This storage procedure is carried out continuously with prevailing values from line board to line board, and the program block 46 calculates whether or not the threshold value N_0 has been exceeded, with each prevailing value. An active line circuit is monitored by the loop detector 37, which detects when the line is supplied with line current. The state of the loop detector is monitored by the local processor 47 which controls the logic block 33 and the bus line 30, via the bus line 60. When the loop detector 37 detects line current, a report to this effect is sent to the main control unit 3.

Figure 5c illustrates another suitable combination of operation parameters to be monitored. In this case, both the ambient temperature T_{AMB} and the subscriber line length L are sensed, in addition to the possible occurrence of a power failure. The manner in which the length of a subscriber line influences the line current will be evident from Figure 3. The shorter the subscriber line, the lower is its ohmic resistance and the greater is the extent to which the load line R_L is rotated anti-clockwise around the origo from the position illustrated in Figure 3, therewith increasing subscriber line current and therewith also the power losses.

A reference value L_0 of the length of the subscriber line is stored in a memory region 54 (see Figure 6) and the prevailing line length value L for each subscriber line belonging to the line boards in the magazine 1 are stored in a memory region 55 in the main control unit 3. The ohm-unit is normally used as a measurement of the length of a subscriber line.

The line length L is determined by detecting the line voltage V'_{AB} with the aid of the amplifier 17. The voltage is signal-processed in the signal processing circuit 18 and low-pass filtered in the low-pass filter 19, and passes to the A/D-converter 38 on whose output the voltage value is produced in digital form and is transmitted to the control logic block 33, via a bus line 39. The signal is sent from the block 33 to the local processor 47, via the bus line 30, and from the local processor 47 to the main control unit 3, via the bus line 48. When the ambient temperature T_{AMB} is greater than the first reference value T^{+}_{AMB} and the line length L is shorter than the line length reference value

L_0 , the control unit 3 delivers the first control signal over the bus line 48 only to those lines which are shorter than the reference value. The RP-state is activated solely for these lines. This may now be sufficient for the temperature to fall beneath the second temperature reference value T_{AMB}^- .

However, if the temperature does not fall to T_{AMB}^- , only the short subscriber lines will be switched to the RP-state, whereas other lines will operate with normal supply. In order not to subject all the owners of short subscriber lines to the disadvantage implied by the RP-state, it is possible, in accordance with the invention, to include the condition that of the "short" subscriber lines only those lines are switched to the RP-state on which traffic has prevailed for such a long period that the call or conversation length t has exceeded a reference value t_0 , e.g. 4 minutes. This condition is illustrated schematically by the broken lines and the rectangles in Figure 5c.

The length of a call is monitored by the loop detector circuit 37, illustrated in Figure 2, which senses continuously whether or not line current is supplied to the subscriber line 12, 13. The line current is supplied during an ongoing call. The supply of line current is terminated when the subscriber replaces the receiver, optionally after a time delay, which is reported to the control logic block 33 by the loop detector circuit 37, via the bus line 60. The control logic block 33 sends this signal to the bus lines 30, 48 connected to the main control unit 3, which measures the duration t of this signal. The value of the duration of this signal is stored in a memory region 62 and is updated continuously. The call length reference value t_0 is stored in a memory region 63. When the call length, or call duration, exceeds the reference value, the main control unit 3 sends the first control signal to the line circuits on which the call is made and orders a transition to the RP-state. None of the other short subscriber lines is switched to the RP-state.

Figure 5d illustrates still another operation parameter which is capable of detection and which can suitably be made the basis for switching to the RP-state. In this case, the temperature T_j of the warmest component or the warmest circuit in each line interface circuit is detected or sensed, in addition to the status of the power network. The line circuit is normally an integrated circuit in the form of a capsule made, for instance, of plastic material, from which a number of legs extend. A temperature sensor 57 (see Figure 2) is arranged adjacent the circuit, for the purpose of measuring circuit temperature. Alternatively, the temperature sensor may be integrated in the integrated circuit and may receive its supply voltage from the line circuit. The temperature sensor 57 includes a temperature responsive transistor circuit which changes its output voltage V_{OUT} when the circuit temperature T_j exceeds a first temperature reference value T_j^+ stored in a memory region 59 in the main

control unit 3. The temperature value T_j is stored in another memory region 56 and is continuously updated. When the capsule temperature exceeds T_j^+ , the main control unit 3 produces the first signal and the individual line circuit is switched to the RP-state. The reason why only the individual line circuit is affected by signals on the bus line 30 is because it is only this individual line circuit which is addressed. As the capsule cools and its temperature drops to a second reference value T_j^- , which is stored in a memory region 58 and which is smaller than T_j^+ , the main control unit sends the second control signal to the individual line circuit. Temperature sensing, or detection, thus takes place individually for each line circuit and therewith affords a more accurate temperature facility than that afforded by the Figure 5a embodiment, since temperature is monitored at precisely the location where the greatest risk of overheating prevails.

According to one alternative embodiment, the temperature sensor 57 can be arranged for measuring the temperature at that leg of the capsule where it is known that the largest current passes. Normally, the maximum circuit temperature is about 110°C and the maximum leg temperature 85°C. The temperature sensor 57 is biased with the aid of a resistor in some suitable manner, so that the sensor output signal will be, for instance, +5 V when the maximum temperature for the line circuit is reached and so that this signal is 0 V when the temperature of the circuit returns to a normal operating temperature.

As a modification to the embodiment illustrated in Figure 5d, where the circuit temperature or solder temperature is reported to the main control unit 3 and where the control unit 3 orders transition to the RP-state of the individual line circuit concerned, it is possible to include a facility in which the output signal V_{OUT} of the temperature sensor 57 is compared with the reference value T_j^+ and T_j^- directly in the control logic block 33, wherein the control logic block produces respective control signals for switching the lines to and from respective RP-states. This relieves the main control unit 3 from its local temperature monitoring function. All state changes, however, must be reported to the main control unit 3.

As a modification to the monitoring facility of the Figure 5b embodiment, the condition can be included that when $T_{AMB} > T_{AMB}^+$, the RE-state is not initiated in all line circuits on the line board when the threshold value N_0 is exceeded, but only in those line circuits (among those which are found on a line board where N_0 has been exceeded) which have a line length L which is shorter than the line length reference value L_0 . Still another modification is one in which the RP-state is initiated solely in those line circuits (among those found on a line board where N_0 has been exceeded) where a call has continued over a time t which is greater than the call length reference value

t_0 for the call length.

Another alternative is that when $T_{AMB} > T^+_{AMB}$, the RE-state is not initiated in all line circuits on those line boards where the threshold value N_0 has been exceeded, but solely on those line circuits where $L < L_0$ and $t > t_0$.

The aforescribed embodiments of the invention can be modified and varied in many ways within the scope of the following Claims.

Claims

1. An arrangement for reducing the line current (I_{AB}) delivered by a line circuit (10) of a telephone exchange to a subscriber line (12, 13), said line circuit (10) including
 - a line voltage measuring circuit (14-17) which functions to measure the line voltage of the subscriber line and to produce a corresponding line voltage signal,
 - a current control circuit (11) which has a plurality of line current/line voltage characteristics (21) stored therein and which has a first input for the line voltage signal, a second input for a selection signal for selection of a predetermined characteristic from among the stored characteristics, and an output for producing a control signal whose value corresponds to the line current prescribed by the selected characteristic and the prevailing line voltage, and
 - current supply means (24-28) having an input and output, said input being connected to the output of the control circuit in order to receive the control signal and the outputs of which are connected to the subscriber line for supplying to said line a line current which corresponds to the current prescribed by the control signal,
 said arrangement further including
 - a main control unit (3) which is connected to the line circuits via a bus line (30, 48) common to said circuits and which sends said selection signal to said other input of the control circuits of said line circuits,
 characterized by
 - at least one sensor (17, 37, 42, 57) for detecting an operation parameter and for sending a corresponding operation parameter signal (T_{AMB} , N , L , t , T_j , mains status) to the main control unit,
 - a processor included in the main control unit (3) and comprising:
 - a) at least one memory region (50, 51, 54, 59, 58, 63, 64) for storing at least one reference value (T^+_{AMB} , T^-_{AMB} , N_0 , L_0 , T^+_j , t_0 , T_j , mains current is present) for the operation par-

ameter,

b) a program memory means (46) for comparing the operation parameter signal with the reference value for the purpose of producing a first selection signal over that time period when the operation parameter exceeds/ is below the reference value, depending on the nature of the operation parameter, and for producing a second selection signal when the operation parameter is below/ exceeds the reference value,

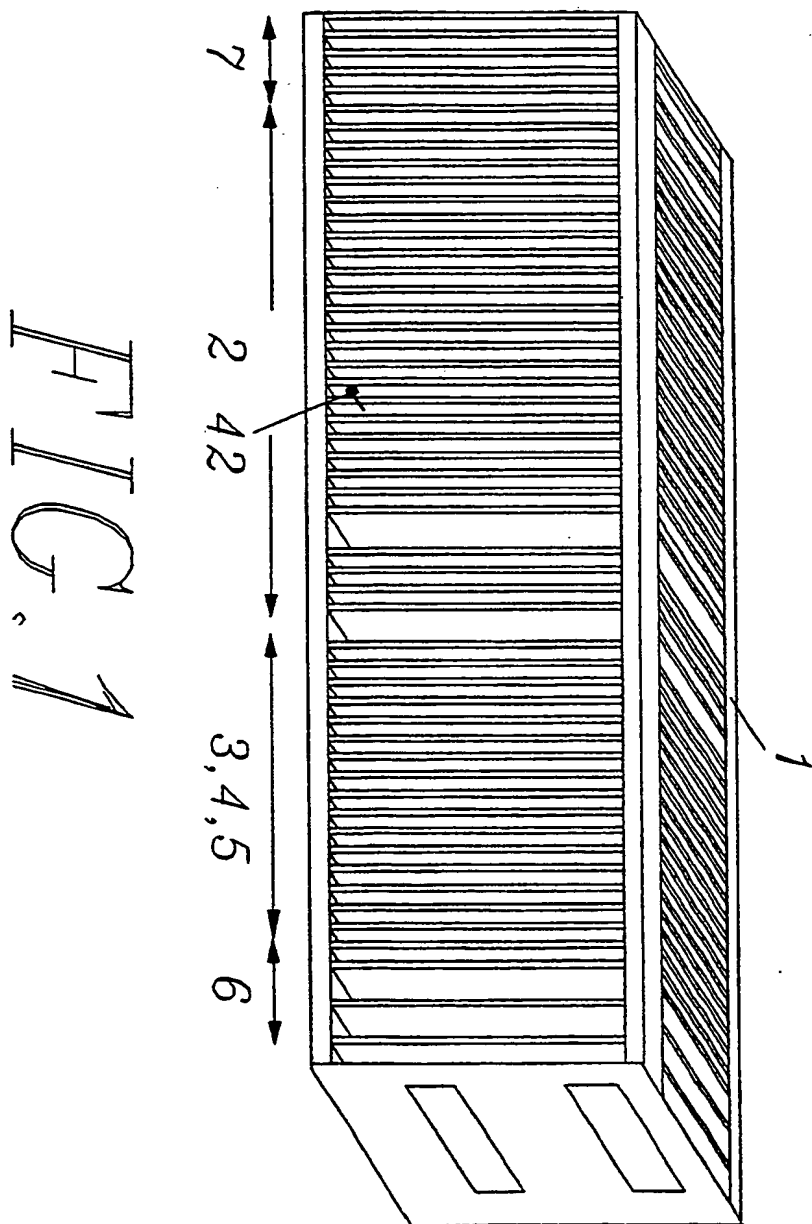
wherein the first selection signal results in the selection of a characteristic (22) which corresponds to supplying the subscriber line with reduced power, and wherein the second selection signal results in the selection of a characteristic (21) which corresponds to supplying the subscriber lines with normal power.

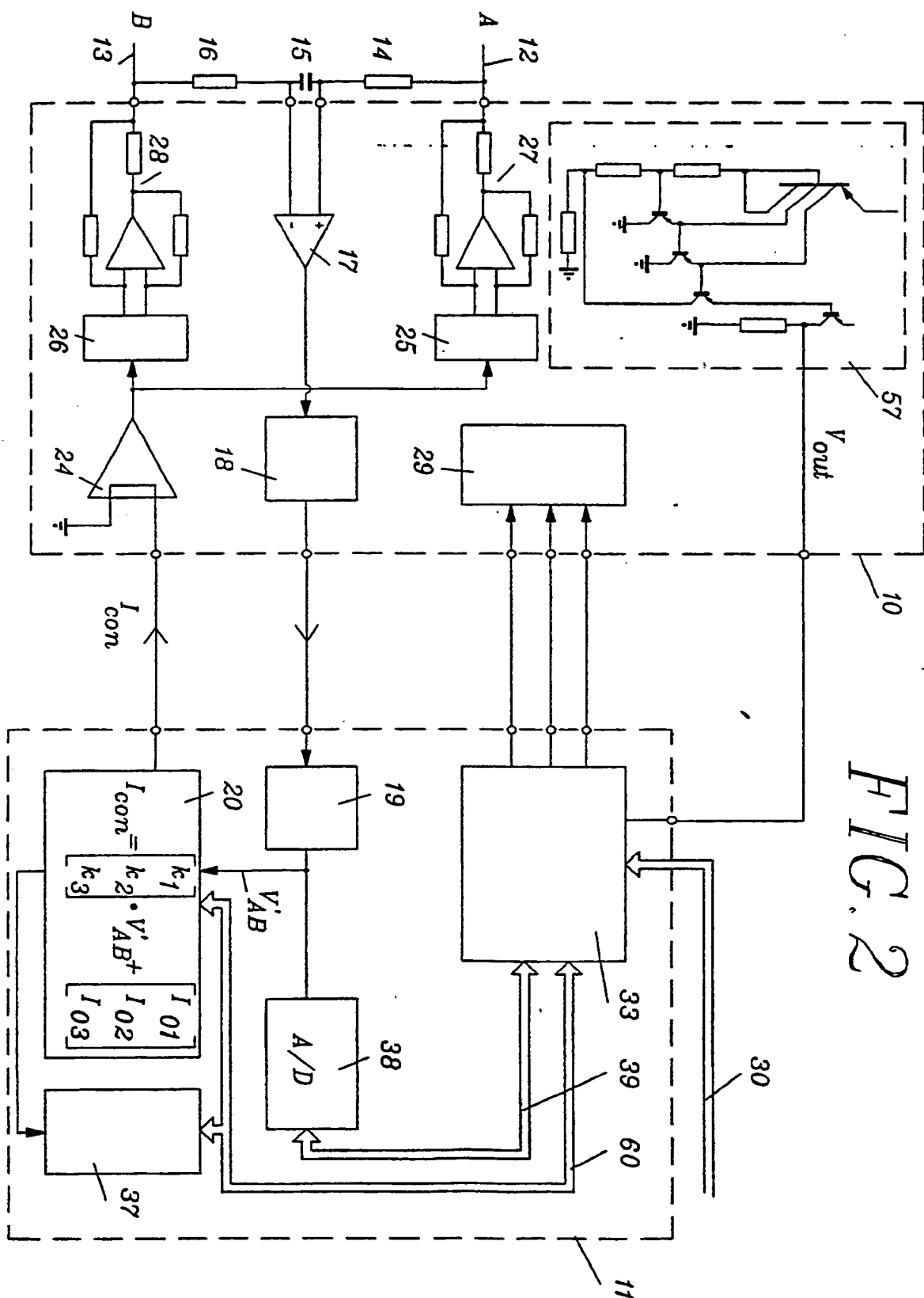
2. An arrangement according to Claim 1, characterized in that the sensor is chosen from the group comprising temperature sensors, sensors for detecting the number of active line circuits on a line board, sensors for detecting the length of a subscriber line, sensors for detecting the length of a call or conversation, sensors for detecting a failure in the conventional power supply to the telephone exchange, and combinations of these sensors.
3. An arrangement according to Claim 2, wherein the line circuits (10) are mounted on line boards (2) which, in turn, are packed in close relationship in a telephone exchange module (1), which, in turn, is mounted in a cabinet, characterized in that the sensor is a first temperature sensor (42) mounted in said cabinet.
4. An arrangement according to Claim 3, characterized in that the program memory means (46) is intended to produce said second selection signal when the temperature falls beneath the reference temperature value to a predetermined extent ($T^+_{AMB} - T^-_{AMB}$).
5. An arrangement according to Claim 4, characterized by a first additional sensor (37, 47) for detecting the number (N) of active line circuits on a line board, a first additional memory region (64) for storing a reference value (N_0) for the number of active line circuits on a line board, wherein the program memory means is intended to deliver the first selection signal to the active circuits on solely that line board on which the number of active line circuits exceeds the reference value (N_0) for the number of active line circuits when the reference temperature value (T^+_{AMB}) and the reference value (N_0) for the number of active line circuits are

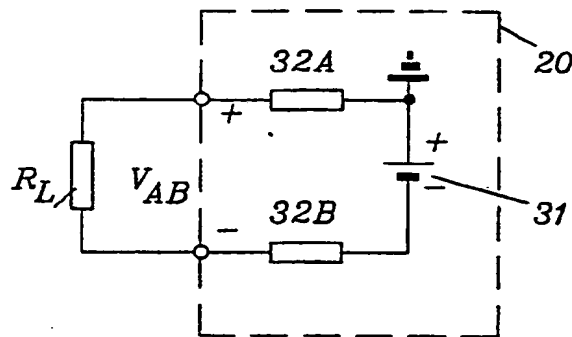
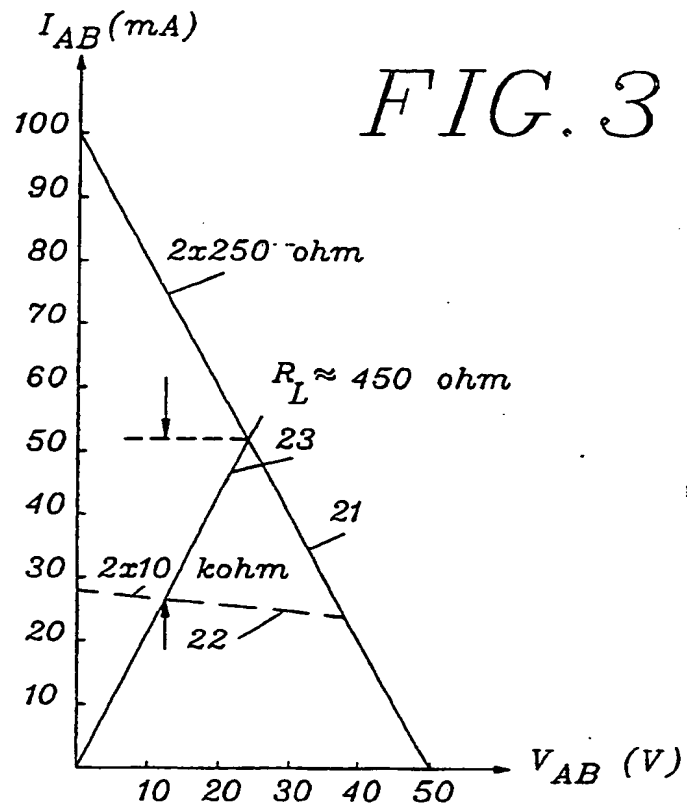
exceeded.

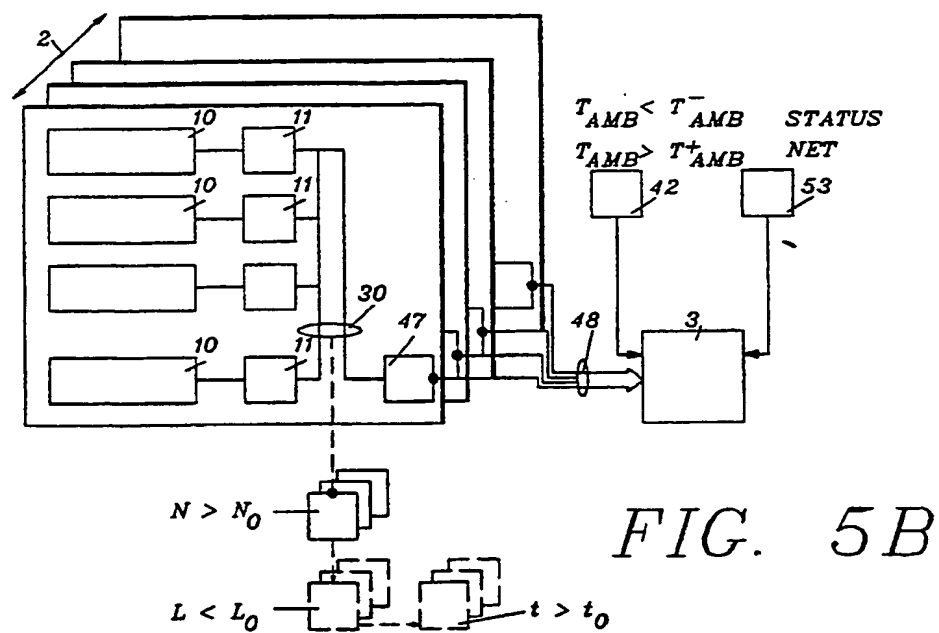
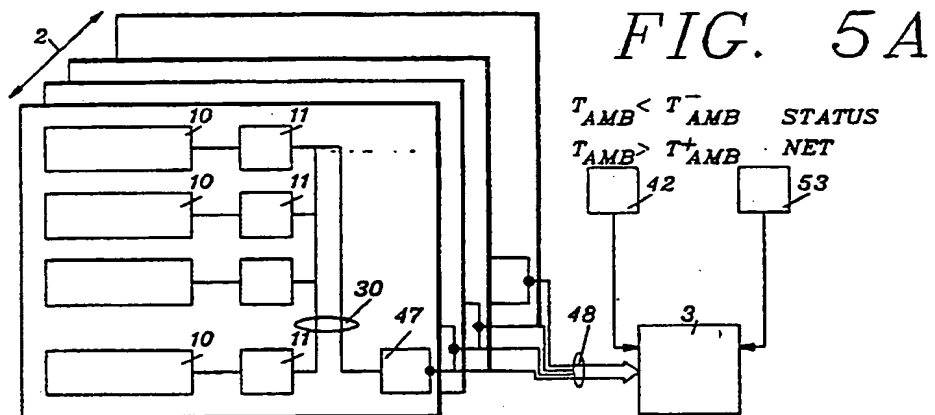
6. An arrangement according to Claim 5, **characterized** by a second additional sensor (17) for detecting the length (L) of a subscriber line, a second additional memory region (54) for storing a line length reference value (L_0), wherein the program memory means (46) is intended to deliver the first selection signal to those active line circuits whose lengths (L) are shorter than the line length reference value (L_0) on those line boards on which the number (N) of active line circuits exceeds the reference value (N_0) of the number of active line circuits when the reference temperature value (T_{AMB}) and the reference value (N_0) of the number of active line circuits are exceeded and the detected subscriber line length is shorter than the reference line-length value (L_0).
7. An arrangement according to Claim 5 or 6, **characterized** by an additional third sensor (37, 46) for detecting the length (t) of a call on an active line circuit on a line board, a third additional memory region (63) for storing a reference value (t_0) for the call length or duration, wherein the program memory means is intended to send the first selection signal to the active line circuits on a line board with which the call length (t) exceeds the line length reference value (t_0) when the reference temperature value (T_{AMB}) and the reference value (N_0) of the number of active line circuits is exceeded and, when the arrangement is dependent on Claim 6, when the length of the subscriber line is shorter than the reference line-length value (L_0).
8. An arrangement according to Claim 2, **characterized** by a second temperature sensor (57) for sensing the temperature (T_j) of an individual component, a fourth additional memory region (55) for storing a second temperature reference value (T^+), wherein the program memory means is intended to deliver the first signal to the line circuit when its temperature (T_j) exceeds the second temperature reference value (T^+).
9. An arrangement according to any one of the preceding Claims, **characterized** by a main sensor for sensing the occurrence of a failure in mains power to the conventional power supply and for sending the first selection signal to all line circuits; an additional memory region (53) for storing a status signal representing normal power supply and power failure, wherein the program memory means is intended to send the first selection signal to all line circuits when the status signal indicates a power failure.

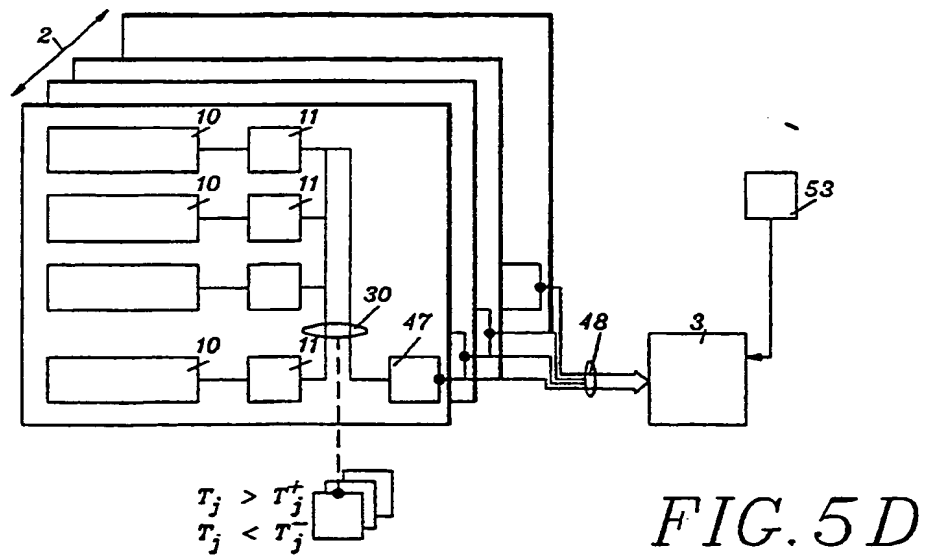
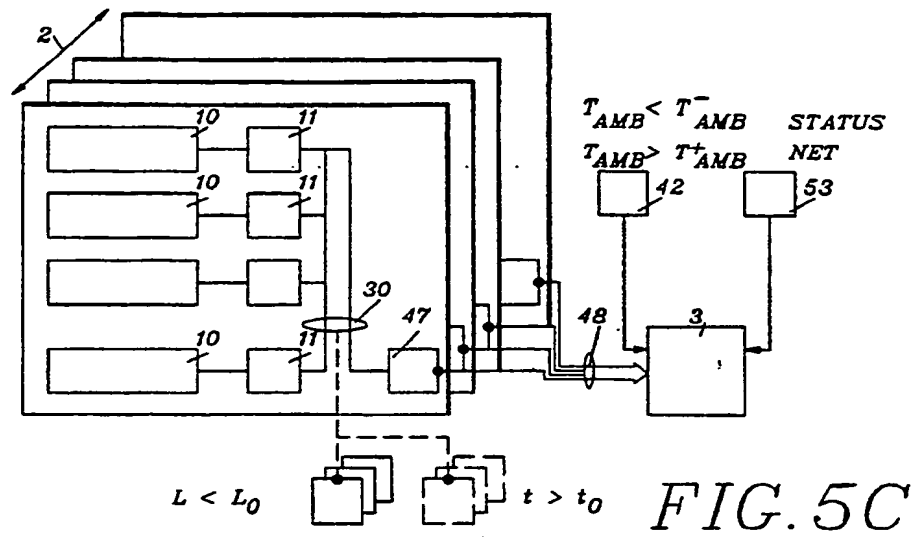
10. An arrangement according to Claim 3 or Claim 8, **characterized** in that the temperature sensor is an oscillator (40) having a network of components which determine oscillator frequency, in that the network includes a temperature responsive element (42) arranged adjacent the line circuit; and in that the temperature reference value is a temperature value (T_{AMB}) related to oscillator frequency.
11. An arrangement according to Claim 9, **characterized** in that the sensor for detecting the number of active line circuits on a line board is a circuit (37) for monitoring the loop current in the subscriber line, and a circuit (46) for determining when the number (N) of subscriber lines on one and the same line board exceeds the reference value (N_0) for the number of active lines.
12. An arrangement according to Claim 6, **characterized** in that the sensor for detecting the length of a subscriber line includes the line voltage measuring circuit (14-17) which produces a value of the voltage across the two wires (12, 13) of the subscriber line, a value of the resistance of the subscriber line pre-stored in the program memory (46), and a line length (L) calculated in the program memory by means of Ohms law.
13. An arrangement according to Claim 7, in which each line circuit includes a monitoring circuit (37) for continuously monitoring the line current in the subscriber line, **characterized** in that the sensor for monitoring call length (t) includes said monitoring circuit (37), which produces an output signal having a first and a second logic level, said output signal having said first logic level being produced during the duration of said call or, alternatively, when an attempt is made to connect a call, and which produces the output signal having said second logic level when a subscriber replaces the receiver, and a time measuring circuit for measuring the time over which the monitoring signal has the first logic level and for delivering a corresponding signal to the main control unit.











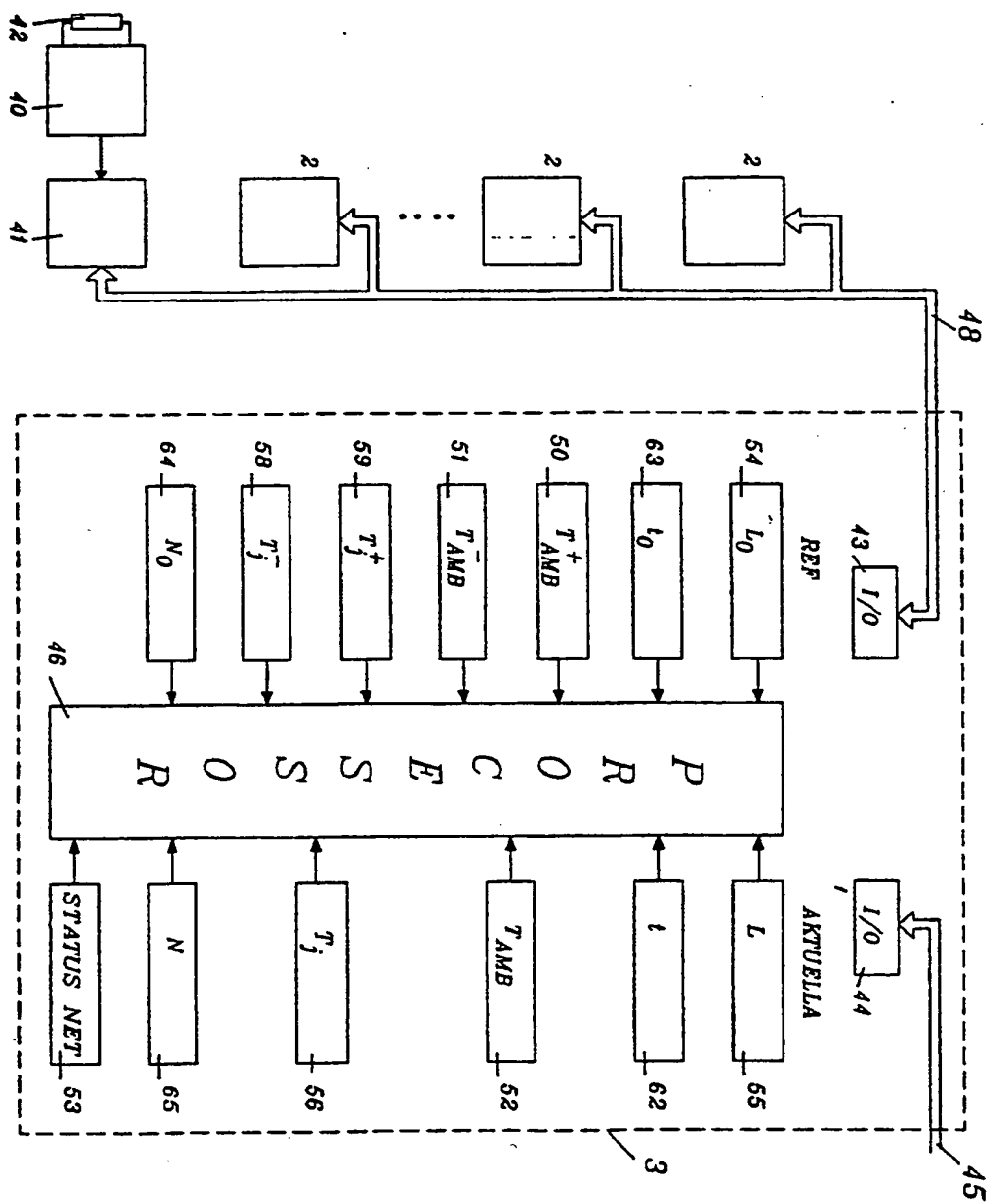


FIG. 6



European Patent
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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application number
EP 91850030.7

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int. Cl.4)
A	GB-A-2 064 915 (STANDARD TELEPHONES AND CABLES LTD) *Claims 1, 4 and figure 8*	1-13	H 04 M 19/00
A	US-A-4 254 305 (R. TREIBER) *Abstract*	1-13	
A	PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN, Vol. 6, no. 107 (L-113), ABSTRACT OF JP 57-37967, publ. 1982-03-02 (NIPPON DENKI K.K. ET AL)	1-13	
A	PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN, Vol. 8, no. 194 (E-264), ABSTRACT OF JP 59-81960, publ. 1984-05-11 (NIPPON DENSHIN DENWA KOSHA ET AL)	1-13	
			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int. Cl.4)
			H 04 M
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search STOCKHOLM		Date of completion of the search 02-04-1991	Examiner LANDSTRÖM R.
<p>CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS</p> <p>X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document</p> <p>T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document</p>			